

God's Everlasting Covenant

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Introduction to Israel:

We will begin our study with a constant truth. **God never changes!** Yet, God's revelation to mankind has always been progressive. This can give the appearance that He has changed. But let's take a closer look. Let's start with the verse, "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today and forever." (Hebrews 13:8) This is a New Covenant understanding of God's progressive revelation, but it is an Old Covenant truth. In Malachi 3:6, we read "I the Lord *do not* change." The word "change" is the Hebrew word "**shanah**". The root of the word means "*to duplicate.*" An expounded definition means: to alter, do again, be given to change, disguise, pervert, do the second time. In other words, He doesn't change, so the things He does, by His very nature, cannot be altered, done again, or redone. In this verse, God is saying He doesn't do "Do overs." God is the same. His truths are never changing. What changes is our understanding of those truths that have been revealed by Him. Our understanding grows with each revelation. It deepens with richness. But His truth NEVER changes. As the great hymn says: Thou changest not, thy compassions they fail not. Great is thy faithfulness, Lord unto me." This is what we are going to learn in our study, "Israel: God's Everlasting Covenant." God is faithful to ALL that He says and promises. He is a covenant-maker God. And He does not break His covenants. In light of that, God continues speaking to the world, and to you and me, through Israel. Israel is called to be a light to the nations. So, we must define Israel. What is God talking about when He refers to "Israel?" There are actually four elements or pieces, to this definition.

1. Israel is a geographic place on the earth, a nation in the Middle East, occupying 8,463 square miles of land that came into existence in 1948.
2. Israel is a people, called by God, set apart for His holy purposes.
3. It is important to realize that there are Jewish people everywhere in the world, not just in the land or nation called "Israel." Israel would include Jews everywhere, in the four corners of the globe.
4. We must add a fourth element to our definition of Israel. Although we are going to *focus* this study on the Jewish people, and the nation of Israel, it is important to know that Israel also includes true believers from the gentile nations, who put their faith and trust in the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob through His Messiah, *Yeshua*, or Jesus. That is you and I. In a wonderfully graphic illustration, Paul describes for us in Romans 11:17-24, how we (who are the wild olive shoots or branches) have been grafted in, and are therefore now part of the cultivated olive tree (Israel). We will get into this later in our study, and we will discover that although we are not physical Israel, we are called to a unique and special relationship with her.

In summary then, Israel includes these four elements:

1. The physical land of Israel,
2. The Jewish people in Israel,
3. The Jewish people in other parts of the world, and
4. True believers in Jesus, grafted into Israel by our faith.

Our study will focus on the physical nation of Israel and the Jews, God's irrevocable covenant people, through whom He uniquely reveals Himself to the world.